

Braley Introduces Bill to Keep Seniors in their Homes, Improve Seniors' Health

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Washington, DC - As Congress works to reform our nation's health care system, Rep. Bruce Braley (D-Iowa) today joined Rep. John Sarbanes (D-Maryland) to introduce Project 2020: Building on the Promise of Home and Community-Based Services, a bill that will help improve seniors' health, reduce the need for nursing home care, and save Medicare and Medicaid money. Senators Maria Cantwell (D-Washington) and Debbie Stabenow (D-Mich.) introduced companion legislation in the Senate.

Project 2020 is a comprehensive approach to enabling older adults and people with disabilities to make their own decisions, take steps to manage their own health risks, and receive the care they choose in order to remain in their own homes and communities for as long as possible.

Project 2020 provides:

Better Access to Information: Services would be made available to help seniors interested in accessing long-term care obtain counseling and assistance on available services.

- Wellness

Programs to Promote Health and Prevent Disease: Scientifically-proven wellness programs for seniors would be provided through Area Agencies on Aging.

- Enhanced

Nursing Home Diversion Services: Specific care plans are provided targeted at helping lower-income individuals stay in the community and off Medicaid.

Examples include grants to help seniors remodel their homes to make them more livable as they age.

"Our seniors' health and happiness is such an important issue," Braley said. "Nursing home care is often a necessary part of growing older, but if we can keep seniors and persons with disabilities healthier and in their homes longer, we can both improve their quality of life and save money. Project 2020 will make seniors' golden years better."

In 2008, over 52 million Americans-and nearly half a million in Iowa-were over the age of 65. That segment of population is expected to double in size by the year 2020, resulting in a sharp increase in demand for long-term care options provided by Medicare and Medicaid.

The cost of home and community-based care is estimated to be one third of the cost of institutional care. The average cost of nursing facility expenditures per person served in 2005 (the most recent data available) was \$26,096, compared with just \$9,459 for individuals receiving home and community based services.

Project 2020 is estimated to reach over 41 million Americans and will reduce federal Medicare and Medicaid costs by approximately \$2.8 billion over the first five years of the program, resulting in a net savings to the federal government of nearly \$250 million. Over ten years, the program could save the federal government over \$1.2 billion.

Attached to this message is the full text of the bill.